

CPYRGHT

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Is There More to the Castro Deal?

On the surface, it would appear that President Kennedy, working through his brother, the Attorney General, and James B. Donovan, specialist extraordinary in the international exchange of prisoners, had made a favorable deal with Fidel Castro. We secured the release of 27 American prisoners held by Castro in exchange for four Cuban criminals held in the United States.

Though we share the satisfaction of the liberated Americans and their families, we can hardly overlook the fact that we again have been forced into the unpleasant business of paying ransom to Fidel Castro. Previously, it took the form of goods to secure the release of the Cuban fighters captured in the Bay of Pigs fiasco. This time it is in the form of three Cuban criminals who plotted sabotage and one who killed a nine-year-old Venezuelan girl in New York.

It is the unfortunate and possibly the unavoidable price which had to be paid to a Communist dictator to secure the freedom and perhaps save the lives of a group of Americans.

Thus a case can be made, based on *force majeure*, to justify the deal, and it is one which Governor Rockefeller was given no choice but to accept when the Federal government of the United States called on him to

release a convicted criminal on the grounds that it was "in the national interest" to effect the exchange.

But is there more to this deal than meets the eye? Is it related in any way to broader political issues between the United States and Communist Cuba or between the United States and the Soviet Union? Is it the fruit of some improved relationship between the government of the United States and these Communist states, the nature of which is still secret and is being withheld from the American public?

These are some of the disturbing questions which come to mind in connection with the latest and repeated barter of goods or human beings in exchange for prisoners held by Communist countries. Mr. Donovan, on his return to Miami from Havana, denied rumors that he was conducting secret negotiations to re-establish diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba.

Perhaps he would not be free to disclose any soundings along these lines even if he had made them to Castro in the secrecy of their room. But even if he did not make them, is any one else doing so?

If anything is being done along these or related lines, are we the public not entitled to know something about them before being confronted once more with a *fait accompli*?